

National Assembly for Wales
European and External Affairs Committee

European Year for Combating Poverty and
Social Exclusion 2010

May 2010



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National Assembly for Wales
European and External Affairs Committee

European Year for Combating Poverty and
Social Exclusion 2010

May 2010



European and External Affairs Committee

The Committee may consider and report on any matters relevant to the exercise by the First Minister, Welsh Ministers, the Counsel General or the Assembly of any of their functions relating to the European Union or external affairs.

Powers

The Committee was established on 26 June 2007. Its powers are set out in the National Assembly for Wales' Standing Orders, particularly SO 18.1. These are available at www.assemblywales.org

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Chair's foreword

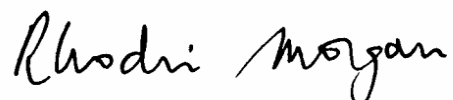
This is the fourth report of inquiry by the European and External Affairs Committee in the third Assembly and the first to be published since I became Committee Chair in January. I thank my predecessor, Sandy Mewies AM, for her work in the initial stages of this inquiry.

Tackling poverty and social exclusion is a top policy priority in Wales, and a European Year on this subject is a great opportunity to evaluate what interventions work well and to share best practice both within Wales and across Europe. It also reminds us that the voices of those actually experiencing poverty must be heard and fully involved in shaping the direction and activities of the European Year in Wales.

This inquiry has also looked at the overall process of promoting European Years in Wales. European Years provide a useful means of highlighting issues that are important to European citizens, and both the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government should take full advantage of the opportunity for reflection, debate and activity they provide. We have made recommendations and agreed action to support this.

The Committee made specific recommendations to the Welsh Government on securing a strong legacy from this European Year 2010 and on linking activities to existing Welsh policy initiatives for combating poverty and social exclusion. I look forward to the Assembly Government's response in due course.

The Committee is most grateful to all the organisations and individuals who contributed to this inquiry, and wishes every success to those holding activities to promote the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.



Rt. Hon. Rhodri Morgan AM
Committee Chair

The Committee's Key Conclusions and Recommendations

The Committee's key conclusions and recommendations to the Welsh Government are listed below, in the order that they appear in this Report. Please refer to the relevant pages of the report to see the supporting evidence and conclusions. Actions agreed for the Committee to take are also set out below.

Key Conclusions

The Committee underlines the importance of ensuring that EY2010 activities will lead to an exchange of best practice, both into Wales and from Wales to other parts of the EU, as a tangible legacy of the Year.

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The Committee wants to see a high percentage of people of all ages affected by poverty involved in framing the agenda and participating in EY2010 activities in Wales.

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Recommendations

Recommendation 1. The Welsh Government to report to the Committee on what plans it has to take forward the 'poverty audit' model for decision making at the devolved level as proposed by the Anti-Poverty Network Cymru.

(Page 17)

Recommendation 2. The Welsh Government to report to the Committee as soon as possible on how it is ensuring that people experiencing poverty are fully involved in EY2010 activities in Wales from planning to execution and legacy planning.

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Recommendation 3. The Welsh Government to report to the Committee in early 2011 on the main outcomes emerging from EY2010 activities in Wales and its action plan to ensure a legacy from those initial outcomes.

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Recommendation 4. The Welsh Government to report to the Committee on how it plans to engage in the Open Method of Coordination for Social Protection and Social Inclusion in the future to ensure a legacy from EY2010 activities at the EU level and to share best practice from activities in Wales.

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Recommendation 5. The Welsh Government to include in its report to the Committee on legacy activity how it will feed the outcomes from EY2010 activities in Wales into the implementation of EU Structural Funds programmes, including by sharing knowledge and best practice examples with the All-Wales Programme Monitoring Committee.
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Recommendation 6. The Welsh Government to report on how the evidence on child poverty and child well-being gathered by the European and External Affairs Committee's inquiry and from EY2010 activities will be taken into account in the strategies being developed as a requirement of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.
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Recommendation 7. The Welsh Government to report to the Committee what actions it is taking to support establishing a consistent way to measure child well-being at EU-level.
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Recommendation 8. The Welsh Government to report to the Committee by April 2011 on progress towards developing common indicators for poverty and social exclusion at EU level.
(Page 24)

Recommendation 9. The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government to report to the European & External Affairs Committee on preparatory work and plans for the European Year for Volunteering 2011 and how it will work with and support Welsh stakeholder organisations.
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Recommendation 10. The Welsh Government to allocate time for an annual debate on the theme of each European Year and related activities planned in Wales, as part of Government business in plenary.
(Page 26)

Actions for the Committee

1: To monitor the development of plans for future European Years and refer information to the Chairs of other Assembly Committees, as appropriate to the designated theme.

2: To request a plenary debate on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010 in order to raise awareness of the opportunity it presents to raise awareness of the issues for Wales and activities being undertaken.

1. Background

1. At an informal meeting on 2 June 2009 the Committee agreed in principle to look at the 2010 European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (EY2010), in particular in terms of the participation of Wales and Welsh organisations in the European Year.

2. On 13 October 2009 a terms of reference was agreed for a short inquiry focused on how the Welsh government and other Welsh stakeholders proposed to maximise the benefits to Wales from this European Year, as well as the broader question of Welsh engagement in European Years generally.

3. The Committee took evidence from the Welsh Government and UK Government Departments responsible for implementing EY2010, as well as from the European Anti-Poverty Network and Welsh stakeholder organisations. Five evidence sessions were held between November 2009 and March 2010. Details are listed at the end of this report.

Terms of reference and key issues to be addressed

4. The terms of reference and key issues to be addressed were:

- to understand the relevance to Wales of the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion;
- to ascertain how the Welsh Government proposes to engage with the European Year, including its involvement in the UK NIB, details of any events or campaigns it proposes to organise and any additional funding it proposes to make available to the third sector to support activities across Wales during the year;
- to understand what (if any) strategy the Welsh Government has towards “European Years” in general, to ensure Wales is engaging as effectively as possible from the opportunities these present;
- to explore how the National Assembly for Wales can support initiatives such as the 2010 European Year and future European Years;

- to hear from Welsh and European stakeholders about how best practice is being shared and the actions they have planned to maximise the opportunities presented by the 2010 European Year.

5. Whilst the evidence received did lead to some exploration of comparative policy solutions to poverty and social exclusion, such as the importance of childcare and early intervention, the primary aims of the inquiry were to look at the *process* of how the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government was engaged in EY2010, what lessons could be learnt and best practices that could be passed on for this and future European Years. The report and recommendations that follow reflect that.

6. One of the fundamental questions arising during the later stages of the inquiry was how the European Year could be a vehicle to establish the effectiveness of the various measures adopted in Wales to tackle poverty and social exclusion. This includes their effectiveness in comparison to approaches being taken in other European Union Member States and regions. Whilst the question of what works best in combating poverty and social exclusion could not be answered by evidence obtained during the course of this short inquiry, **the Committee underlines the importance of ensuring that EY2010 activities will lead to an exchange of best practice, both into Wales and from Wales to other parts of the EU, as a tangible legacy of the Year.**

Policy context: Wales and the poverty agenda

7. Poverty and social exclusion are both issues that have been high on the political agenda in Wales for a number of years, reflected in the policy commitments of the Welsh Government and in the work of the Assembly's Committees.

8. One significant commitment to address poverty and social exclusion in 'One Wales: a progressive agenda for the government of Wales' was to seek further Assembly powers to legislate on issues related to child poverty. This led to the passing of the Children and Families Measure in February 2010. Child poverty is one of the key thematic challenges to be addressed by UK activity during EY2010, and the importance of a legacy in this area is addressed in a separate section of the report which follows.

9. A number of Assembly Committees have conducted inquiries into poverty in Wales and have published the following reports:

- Rural Development sub-committee report on Poverty and Deprivation in Rural Wales (July 2008);¹
- Sustainability Committee report on Fuel Poverty (June 2008)²
- Children and Young People committee report on Child Poverty in Wales: Eradication through Education? (November 2008).³

Background to the European Years

10. Each year since 1983, the European Union has chosen a theme for a campaign – branded as a European Year⁴ – aimed at raising public awareness of and drawing national governments' attention to a specific issue. The themes are many and varied. For each European Year a range of activities is organised to raise awareness around the chosen theme. Some of these are organised at EU level, managed by the European Commission (through a lead Directorate-General), others are organised at the local, regional and national level, and are co-ordinated by Member States and regional/local authorities. Designation of a European Year is formally approved by the European Parliament and European Council on the basis of a proposal from the European Commission.

EY2010 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

11. 2010 has been designated as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (EY2010). The legal text was adopted on 22 October 2008⁵, setting out the aims and objectives of the year, the types of activities to be supported, the budget to be allocated, and the structure for implementing the year across the EU. The lead European

¹ Rural Development Sub-Committee, [Inquiry into Poverty and Deprivation in Rural Wales](#), July 2008 (accessed 15 September 2009)

² Sustainability Committee, [Report on the Committee's Consideration of Fuel Poverty in Wales](#), June 2008 (accessed 15 September 2009)

³ Children and Young People Committee, [Child Poverty in Wales: Eradication through Education](#), November 2008 (accessed 15 September 2009)

⁴ Source: [European Parliament web-site](#)

⁵ See: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:298:0020:0029:EN:PDF>

Commission Directorate-General is DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities⁶.

12. 2010 is a symbolic date as it represents the 10-year anniversary of the commitment by Member States to make a "decisive impact on the eradication of poverty" as part of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs. However, figures published by the Commission in 2008 show that poverty remains a significant problem for the EU⁷:

- 78 million people or 16% of the EU population live below the poverty line (set at 60% of their country's average income);
- 19% of children live under the threat of poverty - 19 million children are affected;
- 1 in 10 European citizens live in households where nobody works.

13. The four overarching EU-level objectives for EY2010 are:

- **Recognition:** recognise the fundamental right of persons experiencing poverty and social exclusion to live in dignity and to take an active part in society;
- **Shared responsibility and participation:** promote public support for social inclusion policies, emphasising collective and individual responsibility in combating poverty and social exclusion, and fostering commitment by all public and private actors;
- **Cohesion:** promote a more cohesive society, where no one doubts that society as a whole benefits from the eradication of poverty;
- **Commitment and concrete action:** renew the pledge of the EU and its Member States to combat poverty and social exclusion, and involve all levels of authority in the pursuit of that aim.

14. A total of €17 million has been allocated from the EU budget to support implementation of EY2010. €8 million of this is allocated for Europe-wide activities such as information and communication campaigns, providing tools for the implementation of the Year and

⁶ See <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=637>

⁷ [DG Employment MEMO/08/625 Brussels](#), 16 October 2008

hosting European events. The remainder is allocated between Member States for actions at the local, regional and national level, defined in a National Programme in each Member State. Member States are required to provide the other half of the money to support these actions. The UK National Implementing Body (NIB) successfully bid for the maximum funding available to the UK from the EU central budget, which with Department for Work and Pensions match-funding amounts to £1.2 million for awareness-raising activity in the UK.

15. The EU intends activities to focus on a limited number of priority areas, and Member States are expected to adapt these to reflect their national, regional and local situations and challenges. The priority areas are:

- integrated strategies to prevent and reduce poverty;
- fighting child poverty;
- promoting inclusive labour markets;
- eradicating disadvantages in education and training, including digital literacy, and the specific needs of disabled people;
- tackling the gender and age dimensions of poverty;
- ensuring equal access to adequate resources and services, including accommodation, health and social protection;
- access to culture and leisure opportunities;
- overcoming discrimination and promoting social inclusion of immigrants and ethnic minorities;
- promoting integrated approaches to active inclusion;
- addressing the needs of people with disabilities, homeless people, and others in vulnerable situations.

16. The types of activities supported will include: awareness-raising campaigns; studies; innovative schemes to promote social inclusion; conferences; and competitions to identify success stories.

European Anti-Poverty Network

17. The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) played an active role in lobbying for 2010 to be designated as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, and is also actively involved in implementation. It has adopted a Declaration entitled "Ensuring a

lasting legacy from 2010", which calls for the EU to establish ambitious targets to eradicate poverty in the EU by 2020, monitoring this through an annual 'scoreboard'. It also suggests the setting up of a 'Social Progress Pact' to put social cohesion and the fight against poverty at the top of the EU agenda, and calls for the development of a new EU "Poverty and Social Inclusion Programme" capable of supporting an EU inclusion strategy.

18. EAPN is coordinating a coalition of NGOs at European level to promote dialogue with the EU institutions and ensure that the Year results in concrete actions and efficient policies. EAPN's specific demands post-2010 are set out in Annex A of this report.

Implementation in the UK and Wales

19. Each Member State is required to appoint a National Implementing Body (NIB) that is responsible for drawing up a National Programme, setting priorities for the European Year and selecting the individual actions to be proposed for community funding. The UK NIB is comprised of officials from the European Social Inclusion Team at the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), the European Social Fund Division and the Devolved Administrations. Welsh Government representation is from officials within the Communities Division. The UK NIB also proposed to consult with a 'stakeholder group' bringing together government, local government, the voluntary and community sector, and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and the groups that represent them.

20. The three main aims of the UK National Programme are:

- to raise awareness of the causes, prevalence and consequences of poverty and social exclusion, and of the policies that aim to tackle these issues;
- to promote and facilitate the engagement and participation of a broad range of people, including among others businesses, voluntary organizations, social enterprises at the local, regional, and national level;
- to ensure a lasting legacy - including finding and sharing good practice and setting up ongoing contacts.

21. The programme will be implemented through a mixture of activities at local and national levels, with supporting finance from the

£1.2m budget available for UK EY2010. Calls for proposals were launched during summer 2009 for: regional activities (up to £30,000 in each English Government Office Region and Devolved Administration; four UK-wide thematic programmes of activity, to be delivered at a local/grassroots level (up to £125,000 per programme); and technical assistance (up to £60,000).

22. The UK NIB has placed particular emphasis on activities to address child poverty, multiple deprivation, overcoming barriers to the labour market, older people and poverty and social exclusion, with proposals expected to recognise the need for inter-generational approaches.

23. The UK NIB has also developed a communications strategy for EY2010, to include a launch event in each country of the UK; a dedicated website; a media campaign, focused on dispelling myths about poverty and social exclusion and raising awareness of the causes and consequences of poverty; and a high-profile closing event. Organisations will be able to 'brand' and 'badge' their activities as part of the European Year, and a series of 'roadshow' style events are being planned across the UK during the autumn, coordinated by DWP, to raise awareness of EY2010 and initiate debate about the issues.

Activities in Wales

24. For EY2010 the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government is the lead Welsh Minister for the coordination of activities in Wales. Wales is receiving funding for technical support for awareness-raising activities, funding for a Welsh launch event – to take place on 24 June in Swansea - and funding to run Thematic Programmes in Wales. These thematic activities in Wales will be run by Working Links, the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation, Save the Children and Community Service Volunteers. The Bevan Foundation was successful in its bid for £25,441 of funding to hold a conference in Wales to encourage the exchange of solutions to poverty and to produce short films to document the experiences of people in poverty. This conference is planned to take place at the end of September. In February the European Commission also presented its work on EY2010 to a group of young Welsh linguists at a 'Wales, Europe and the World' event organised by the European Commission office in Wales and Welsh partner organisations including CILT Cymru, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and Cardiff Council.

2. Key issues

Raising awareness of poverty and social exclusion

25. The evidence to the Committee emphasised that EY2010 is more about awareness-raising activities for combating poverty and social exclusion, rather than delivering concrete actions on the ground to address these challenges. This was made clear in discussions concerning the types of activities that can be supported through the budget available in the UK for EY2010, and also in terms of the limited amount of funding available.

26. The Welsh Government's stated aims for EY2010 were set out by the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government:

“...my view is that we are trying to create awareness of these issues, and promote a greater understanding among civic society of combating poverty and social exclusion.”⁸

...our political intent is to use this as an opportunity to promote an agenda item that is important to us and to work proactively to make this happen so that we get the best value for money and the greatest output from this opportunity.”⁹

27. While this aim of raising awareness is clear, witnesses referred to the need and possibility to build a lasting legacy as a result of the Year and the Committee was strongly of the view that this was critical.

Building a Legacy from the European Year

28. Speaking about the main outcome of EY2010, Children in Wales said:

“The main outcome of the European year has got to be a more consolidated approach by the public, politicians and organisations towards an agenda for combating social exclusion.”¹⁰

29. Activities to promote the year will include a national conference in Wales. Children in Wales hoped that hearing from the people delivering anti-poverty programmes would flag up what was happening on the

⁸ Transcript 17 November 2009, paragraph 36

⁹ Transcript 17 November 2009, paragraph 59

¹⁰ Transcript -1 December 2009, paragraph 84

ground, which programmes were working and where funding could be better spent in the future.

30. In terms of a lasting legacy, the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government highlighted three things:

- a greater awareness of the issues, particularly in light of the requirement on public bodies in Wales to develop child poverty strategies over the next 12 months;
- highlighting best practice across Wales and as an opportunity to learn from what is going on across the EU;
- to strengthen the networks involved in combating poverty and promoting social inclusion.

31. Children in Wales also referred to the importance of a dialogue taking place in Wales beyond 2010:

"It is important that we have a dialogue beyond 2010. As I say, some of the dialogue already started with the Children and Families (Wales) Measure and the duties coming through this year. Hopefully, we will have a very strong national child poverty strategy in place with clear duties, targets and milestones for Government and other stakeholders to deliver on."¹¹

32. The Anti Poverty Network Cymru (APNC) spoke about the legacy of EY2010:

"...as being a situation to which we are all firmly committed, in whichever European country, so that people have the hope of being better off at the end of the year than they were at the beginning of it."¹²

33. The APNC also highlighted the important role of the Social Policy Task Force in the UK, as an example of good practice to be shared across Europe. APNC proposed the introduction of a poverty audit into decision making at devolved and UK government level:

"...the very fact that this taskforce exists means that the UK is a model for other European countries, because not enough of them allow people at the grass roots to have that kind of

¹¹ Transcript 1 December 2009, paragraph 89

¹² Transcript 17 November 2009, paragraph 141

relationship with a body like the Department for Work and Pensions, so that their voices are heard and their needs, thoughts and ideas taken forward. Already, a sea change has happened in that civil servants and people with grass-roots experience are working together. Perhaps that model could be taken further within devolved Governments. In the same way as an equalities body would have a representative who has some kind of disability, or as a children's body would have a youth representative, it would be good to have a kind of poverty audit running through much of the decision making that is made by devolved and UK Government."¹³

Recommendation 1: The Welsh Government to report to the Committee on what plans it has to take forward the 'poverty audit' model for decision making at the devolved level as proposed by the Anti-Poverty Network Cymru.

An opportunity to engage and empower

34. The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government identified third sector organisations and networks as the primary target of the European Year and the challenge of going beyond the 'usual suspects' was noted. Anti Poverty Network Cymru stressed the importance of reaching out to those in poverty or who have experienced poverty:

"Our aim is that the voices of people who have experienced or are experiencing poverty and social exclusion should be heard at all levels."¹⁴

35. They also emphasised the importance of a dialogue with people who make decisions, highlighting in particular links to the Welsh Government:

"We would welcome an opportunity to be in close liaison with members of the Welsh Assembly Government in any way that is suitable and acceptable. We are anxious to dispel myths about people who are poor, and if we can make the reality visible and have people speaking for themselves, rather than having myths built around them, the areas where they live and their way of life, that would be an enormous step forward. Therefore, if we

¹³ Transcript 17 November 2009, Paragraph 127

¹⁴ Transcript 17 November 2009, paragraph 111

can achieve visibility, for example in meetings with the Welsh Assembly Government, that would be great."¹⁵

36. This issue was explored further with the Bevan Foundation, which will be holding a conference in late September. The Committee welcomed the intended focus on tackling underlying causes of poverty including worklessness, lack of education, disability and ill-health, rather than symptoms or different categories of poverty. The Committee noted the intended 60:40 split in those invited to attend the conference: 60 per cent to be policy makers and 40 per cent those experiencing poverty. Whilst recognising the need to generate understanding and influence policy-makers to achieve real solutions, **the Committee wants to see a high percentage of people of all ages affected by poverty involved in framing the agenda and participating in EY2010 activities in Wales.**

Recommendation 2: The Welsh Government to report to the Committee as soon as possible on how it is ensuring that people experiencing poverty are fully involved in EY2010 activities in Wales from planning to execution and legacy planning.

Recommendation 3: The Welsh Government to report to the Committee in early 2011 on the main outcomes emerging from EY2010 activities in Wales and its action plan to ensure a legacy from those initial outcomes.

Exchange of best practice at EU and international level

37. The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government emphasised the potential to make more effective use of the European Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) for Social Protection and Social Inclusion. The Open Method of Coordination is an EU-level policy development mechanism that was introduced to allow Member States to co-ordinate their efforts to address the social inclusion and protection issues that they share. Through the OMC, Member States have defined common objectives and quantitative and qualitative indicators and they regularly report back on their policies and achievements in order to share best practice.

¹⁵ Transcript 17 November 2009, paragraph 171

38. The European Anti Poverty Network spoke about the importance of the OMC in supporting the achievement of a number of its key goals for the political legacy from EY2010:

"We are asking for a declaration on poverty and social exclusion, which it also looks as though we are going to get. We are also asking about the whole question of how you measure progress in a way that goes beyond the gross domestic product debate, because progress should not be recognised only by economic indicators, but by a broader social approach. We want to make the open method of co-ordination a key instrument for delivery on this. For us, that means revitalising the national, regional and local levels, and we would look to have allies from the regional level on this. We think that the open method of coordination can only work if you bring in the local and regional levels and make them key actors."¹⁶

Recommendation 4: The Welsh Government to report to the Committee on how it plans to engage in the Open Method of Coordination for Social Protection and Social Inclusion in the future to ensure a legacy from EY2010 activities at the EU level and to share best practice from activities in Wales.

Linking EY2010 to EU Cohesion Policy

39. The Committee noted the importance of making links between activities in support of EY2010 and the EU Structural Funds Programmes in Wales, particularly to develop training schemes leading to high-quality jobs, as the best way out of poverty. This point was supported by evidence from the European Anti Poverty Network.

Recommendation 5: The Welsh Government to include in its report to the Committee on legacy activity how it will feed the outcomes from EY2010 activities in Wales into the implementation of EU Structural Funds programmes, including by sharing knowledge and best practice examples with the All-Wales Programme Monitoring Committee.

¹⁶ Transcript 26 January 2010, Paragraph 13

Child poverty and child well-being

40. Child poverty and child well-being were highlighted as areas in need of attention during EY2010, including calls for more concerted action at EU level. Children in Wales said addressing child poverty was particularly important, especially in terms of leaving a lasting legacy from EY2010:

“On the question on the lasting legacy, a key issue for me is that there should be a greater awareness of the issues and barriers that people face as a result of child poverty because there is a blockage in relation to public support for and understanding of child poverty issues. The European year can help to raise the understanding of the person on the street of what poverty means in general and what it means on a daily basis for a family who cannot afford fuel because of fuel and transport poverty issues.”¹⁷

41. EY2010 should also lead to improvements for children and young people generally:

“Finally, for me, the lasting legacy would be improved outcomes for children and young people. That is crucial because we can raise awareness as much as we like, but we need to have actions at the end of the day that improve the outcomes of children who are currently struggling.”¹⁸

42. Children in Wales also called for co-ordinated action at EU level to establish consistent ways of measuring child well-being:

“A commitment to measuring [child wellbeing] is essential. Wales is part of the way down that route, so the implementation side of that is important. However, at the European Union level, it is essential that all member states agree, and this is where the problems lie. Eurochild has been campaigning to have, not so much an EU target, but an agreement that every country should try to reduce child poverty by a certain percentage. However, we need an agreement that that is an important agenda.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Transcript 1 December 2009, paragraph 88

¹⁸ Transcript 1 December 2009, paragraph 90

¹⁹ Transcript 1 December 2009, paragraph 92

43. Both Children in Wales and the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government spoke about the strategic importance of the introduction of the Children and Families Measure, which received Royal approval in February 2010 and requires Welsh Ministers to prepare and publish in 2010 a strategy for contributing to the eradication of child poverty in Wales, and keep it under regular review. The Measure also places a duty on specific Welsh public bodies to prepare and publish strategies to assist in the goal of eradicating child poverty by 2020:

“A key element of that proposed Measure is to establish a strong evidence base for tackling child poverty in Wales, and one advantage of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion is that a tremendous amount of international experience can be gathered to allow us to do that.”²⁰

44. Children in Wales raised the provision of what they called “good-quality, effective childcare” as a major challenge, in terms of addressing high levels of unemployment amongst young people:

“...a big challenge for me and what has been quite stark is that we have the highest unemployment level across the whole of the UK and there are challenges, in particular, around young people not in education and training. So, the Assembly Government could do more work on that... I am not only talking about any old childcare, but good-quality, effective childcare. That has been successful in the Nordic countries and is another reason why they have had such low child poverty rates over many years. That would be one of my key calls, namely to focus greatly on improving childcare.”²¹

45. The European Anti-Poverty Network’s policy recommendations include a call to agree a recommendation on child poverty that effectively combats family poverty.

46. The economic benefits of early intervention through investing in young children were also raised by Children in Wales:

“The clear message from Canada, and from the OECD countries, is that the gross domestic product of a country rises significantly if you invest in very young children... The figures

²⁰ Transcript 17 November 2009, paragraph 6

²¹ Transcript 1 December 2009, paragraphs 93-94

are almost unbelievable about how great an impact that investing in young children can have on GDP."²²

Recommendation 6: The Welsh Government to report on how the evidence on child poverty and child well-being gathered by the European and External Affairs Committee's inquiry and from EY2010 activities will be taken into account in the strategies being developed as a requirement of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

Recommendation 7: The Welsh Government to report to the Committee what actions it is taking to support establishing a consistent way to measure child well-being at EU-level.

European Anti-Poverty Network: Securing a political legacy

47. The evidence from the European Anti Poverty Network underlined the importance of EY2010 as part of its wider lobbying strategy to create what it describes as a "lasting political legacy". In particular this is focused on trying to secure commitments in the new Europe 2020 Strategy, being prepared at EU level as the successor to the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs. To achieve this it has established a coalition of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) across Europe to give weight to its key messages:

"That coalition is trying to raise awareness of poverty to begin a discussion about the structural causes of poverty and to get actors at national and regional levels involved in the European year and to pull it together for a common legacy."²³

48. EAPN takes a critical view of the Lisbon Strategy, which it says has failed to deliver on a commitment made in 2000 to reduce poverty levels across the EU:

"We are concerned that the EU has not made significant progress on poverty; in 2000 there was a commitment at the Lisbon council to take a decisive step towards the eradication of poverty, but in reality we still have exactly the same levels of poverty as in 2000: that is, between 16 and 17 per cent, with 79 million people at risk of poverty. There is increasing

²² Transcript 1 December 2009, Paragraph 96

²³ Transcript 26 January 2010, paragraph 11

inequality across member states—some in particular. So, the general package, the strategy, has not worked, and our particular concern is that the growth and jobs strategy has not worked, and that is because there has not been a clear objective on social cohesion, tackling poverty and reducing inequality as a central pillar of the EU's work. It is assumed that, by taking an approach to growth and jobs, you will get a trickle-down effect; that does not work, and it never has."²⁴

49. EAPN's evidence also highlights the importance of future EU Cohesion Policy in addressing the core aims of tackling poverty and social exclusion, although it expresses concerns that this has become more difficult to support:

"The structural funds are crucial and we need to use them to deliver on that commitment on poverty, social exclusion and inequalities. Whereas structural funds had a strong role in the past—I see that particularly from my work in Wales—in delivering on social exclusion, that is increasingly becoming more difficult. We are worried about the debates around renationalisation and moving away from having these broad objectives on poverty and social exclusion."²⁵

50. EAPN calls for 10 actions to be taken in the new Europe 2020 Strategy to tackle poverty and social exclusion (listed in Annex A):

"We are saying that EU 2020 is fundamental. We must use this opportunity to get the strategy right, which means making poverty and social exclusion one of its key challenges. Today, we are sending out a letter to Prime Ministers and heads of state on this issue and we are working closely with the Spanish presidency to try to get this as one of its main issues. We also want a clear reference to reducing inequalities, because although that is mentioned in the Council conclusions in December, it has not been followed up. It is crucial, in the context of the crisis, for reducing inequality to be a central goal."²⁶

²⁴ Transcript 26 January 2010, paragraph 10

²⁵ Transcript 26 January 2010, paragraph 15

²⁶ Transcript 26 January 2010, paragraph 12

51. The Committee welcomes the explicit focus on targets for combating poverty and social exclusion set out in the draft Europe 2020 Strategy published by the European Commission on 3 March. The Committee has been exploring these issues within its separate inquiry into the future of EU Cohesion Policy and strongly supports having an EU-wide Cohesion Policy that will support regions in meeting targets for social inclusion.

Poverty indicators

52. The Committee examined what is being measured when considering high levels of “relative poverty” across the EU. The headline EU indicators collated by Eurostat measure poverty within Member States, which effectively means a measure of inequality. However, EAPN said much work had been undertaken at EU level to establish common indicators that apply across the EU to measure absolute poverty. In its written evidence EAPN states:

“Poverty is a multidimensional phenomena and a daily reality for millions of people across the European Union: Poverty is not simply the lack of financial resources and income, it also encompasses the notion of vulnerability, precariousness, lack of opportunities, injustice and denial of rights – such as access to education, health, housing, employment services/training as well as cultural, political participation. Against the backdrop of the crisis NGOs are concerned that the current EU ‘growth and jobs’ strategy and market liberalization, without attention to fairness, inclusion, participation and redistribution, has failed to deliver a social Europe, where everybody has access to fundamental rights.”²⁷

53. The development of indicators that go beyond crude measures of gross domestic product or income is a matter that the Committee has also explored in its inquiry into future Cohesion Policy. The Committee welcomes action at the EU level to develop common indicators for poverty and social exclusion.

Recommendation 8: The Welsh Government to report to the Committee by April 2011 on progress towards developing common indicators for poverty and social exclusion at EU level.

²⁷ Written evidence, EUR(3)-02-10-Paper 1- 26 January 2010

How Wales participates in European Years

54. There is no central coordination team responsible for European Years in the Welsh Government. This responsibility is taken on by relevant Welsh Ministers – in the case of EY2010 the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government:

“It is for individual Welsh Assembly Government Ministers to decide the basis and extent of their involvement in European Years and any associated activities. EEAD [Welsh Government’s European and External Affairs Division] will inform or notify relevant policy departments of planned forthcoming events and lead UK Government Departments are expected to consult with the devolved administrations when planning UK activity.”²⁸

55. The European Anti-Poverty Network specifically recommended that the European and External Affairs Committee actively engaged in the EU Year and supported EAPN Cymru and other NGO proposals, as well as supporting the EAPN and NGO coalition demands for a legacy at national and EU level. In particular it pointed to activities planned during the year, including two European Focus Weeks: Spring Focus Week (24-30 May) and Autumn Focus Week (11-17 October), and events at the Wales and UK level.

56. The Committee noted the importance of engaging early in European Years and will in future seek to consider the possible implications for Wales as soon as European Year themes have been agreed by the European institutions.

57. The European Commission has proposed that 2011 should be designated the European Year of Volunteering, recognising that “Volunteering has a great, but so far under-exploited, potential for the social and economic development of Europe.” The stated objectives of the Year are to:

- work towards an enabling and facilitating environment for volunteering in the EU;
- empower volunteer organisations and improve the quality of volunteering;
- reward and recognise volunteering activities; and

²⁸ Written evidence, EUR(3)-14-09-Paper 1 – 17 November 2009

- raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering.

58. The Commission proposes to allocate a budget of €6 million for the European Year and an additional €2 million for preparatory actions starting in 2010. The emphasis will be placed on funding projects with a volunteering dimension in the EU's action programmes, such as the 'Youth in Action Programme', with ownership of the European Year and organisation of activities remaining with the volunteers and the volunteer organisations.

Recommendation 9: The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government to report to the European & External Affairs Committee on preparatory work and plans for the European Year for Volunteering 2011 and how it will work with and support Welsh stakeholder organisations.

59. The European Commission also held a consultation during 2009 on the possibility of designating 2012 as the European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity. It is unlikely that the European Year 2012 will be officially designated until summer 2010.

Action for the Committee: To monitor the development of plans for future European Years and refer information to the Chairs of other Assembly Committees, as appropriate to the designated theme.

60. The Committee would like to see a plenary debate held in the National Assembly for Wales on the theme of each European Year.

Recommendation 10: The Welsh Government to allocate time for an annual debate on the theme of each European Year and related activities planned in Wales, as part of Government business in plenary.

Action for the Committee: To request a plenary debate on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010 in order to raise awareness of the opportunity it presents to raise awareness of the issues for Wales and activities being undertaken.

Annex A – European Anti-Poverty Network Specific Demands

EAPN prepared a comprehensive proposal as a contribution to the EU2020: EU we can trust: EAPN proposals for post 2010 - which sets out long-term demands for the delivery on poverty and social exclusion in the context of the post EU2020 strategy. The key demands for 2010 to achieve a strong EU policy legacy which guarantees a visible step forward for the fight against poverty, social exclusion and inequality in the next decade are:.

Getting the EU 2020 strategy right

1. Make combating poverty and social exclusion a key challenge and priority for EU2020.
2. Tackle the causes of poverty, making the reduction of inequalities in income and wealth through redistribution a prerequisite for delivering a better, fairer EU.
3. Ensure participation and ownership of EU2020 by embedding EU/national structured dialogue with civil society, including people in poverty.

Getting the instruments right

4. Hold an EU Council on Poverty and Social Exclusion with a declaration by Heads of States.
5. Measure progress for EU2020 with social as well as economic indicators, beyond GDP, including at risk of poverty and inequality indicators and targets.

6. Re-launch a tougher Social OMC as key instrument for driving delivery on poverty/social exclusion and inequality particularly through:

- Progress on poverty and inequality targets at EU and national level.
- Better governance and participation at national and EU level establishing guidelines, indicators and benchmarking, embedding participative national yearly

reviews of National Action Plans, involving NGOs and people in poverty.

Getting the policies right

7. Implement the Active Inclusion Recommendation including

- New Integrated Guidelines on Active Inclusion, and National Action Plan follow up in EU2020 and Social OMC, with indicators and recommendations.
- Ensure progress on ensuring adequacy of *minimum income* – move forward on proposal for a framework directive and on delivery on *quality work* Guidelines.
- Guarantee right to *affordable quality services*, through EU Framework Directive

8. Follow up on OMC thematic years on child poverty and homelessness/housing exclusion.

- Agree a Recommendation on Child Poverty which effectively combats family poverty.
- Agreement to end street homelessness by 2015, building on the EP written declaration.

9. Putting the fight against discrimination at the centre of the EU year.

- Progress on the adoption of the anti-discrimination directive for all Article 13 groups.
- Mainstreaming equality/anti-discrimination in anti-poverty policy; with policies combating xenophobia and racism against migrants and ethnic minorities (e.g. Roma).

Getting EU funding right

10. Use EU funding to progress the fight against poverty and support NGOs

- New EU Programme (Progress), including support for local anti-poverty projects.
- Commitment to ensure Structural Funds can be accessed by NGOs, using technical assistance and global grants and used to deliver Social OMC priorities.

Witnesses

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the Committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed in full at http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-other-committees/bus-committees-third-eur-home/eur_inquiries/eur_3_-ey2010.htm

17 November 2009

Dr Brian Gibbons AM	Minister for Social Justice and Local Government
Callum MacInnes	Child Poverty Unit, Welsh Assembly Government
Caroline Turner	Director, Communities Division, Welsh Assembly Government
Elsbeth Darby	European Year Project, Department for Work and Pensions
Geoff Scammell	Head of European Year Project, Department for Work and Pensions
Frances Ballin	Anti-Poverty Network Cymru
Annaliise Shanahan	Anti-Poverty Network Cymru

1 December 2009

Sean O'Neill	Policy Director, Children in Wales
Catriona Williams	Chief Executive, Children in Wales

26 January 2010

Siân Jones	European Anti-Poverty Network
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16 March 2010

Victoria Winckler	The Bevan Foundation
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List of written evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee.
All written evidence can be viewed in full at

http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-other-committees/bus-committees-third-eur-home/eur_inquiries/eur_3_-ey2010.htm

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Dr Brian Gibbons AM	Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, Welsh Assembly Government	EUR(3)-14-09: Paper 1
Frances Ballin	Anti-Poverty Network Cymru	EUR(3)-14-09: Paper 3
Catriona Williams	Children in Wales	EUR(3)-15-09: Paper 2
Frances Ballin	Anti-Poverty Network Cymru	EUR(3)-01-10: Paper 6
Siân Jones	European Anti-Poverty Network	EUR(3)-02-10: Paper 1
Victoria Winckler	Bevan Foundation	EUR(3)-05-10: Paper 2
Carl Sargeant AM	Minister for Social Justice and Local Government	Letter of 25 February 2010